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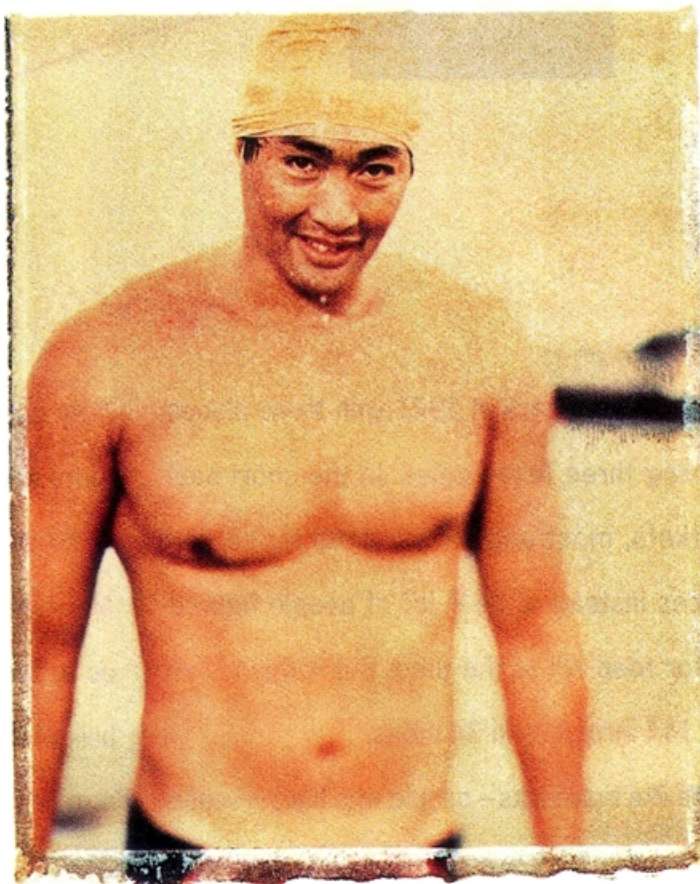
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In partnership with the *San Francisco Review of Books*, reviews of new fiction by Nicholson Baker and Ethan Canin, and a conversation with novelist April Sinclair.



VINCE HUANG

"I am humbled by water and have great respect for it. I swim to maintain that respect."

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Photography by Daniel Proctor

Styling by Anne Cook / Koko

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(Not available in newsstand copies)



NANCY FOUGERE

Swam the 1990 New Year's Day Alcatraz Swim while eight months pregnant.

"I met my current boyfriend—a sports fisherman who goes out at 6 am—when I was swimming around the breakwater. Sometimes I do the mermaid twirl for him. When I wear fins, I can really pull myself out of the water."

BY PEGGY KNICKERBOCKER

Early mornings, I walk down to the bay as the rising sun strikes the Golden Gate with a pale pink light. My destination is the Dolphin Club, the old-fashioned swimming and rowing club on the beach at Aquatic Park. ■ I love the funky old-salt feel of the club. Inside the bright-white wooden building with Mediterranean blue trim, an array of beautifully restored and maintained rowboats gleams with varnish, waiting for rowers to take them out on the bay. I am greeted by dripping swimmers, in orange wetsuit caps, on their way to the showers; they've done their swim and it's only seven in the morning. ■ A handful of men and women work out in the weight room before taking the plunge. On a recent morning, that group included an art professor, a policeman, a writer, an architect, a pilot, a real-estate tycoon, a longshoreman, a gardener, a graphic artist, and a Zen abbot. They ranged in age from their early twenties to well into their eighties. Most are risk takers, but we're all called nutcakes or daredevils. ■ The water of the San Francisco

t a k i n g t h e w a t e r s

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CRISTIANA CEPPAS



J. B. SULLIVAN

Has been swimming the bay for eighteen years.

"When I was recovering from a bypass in 1976, I got back in the water gradually—five strokes the first day, then eight. I've been counting ever since. The Golden Gate is 1445 strokes. Alcatraz is 1820, depending on the tide."

Bay does something for the body and the spirit. I'm addicted. I've learned the bay's seasonal idiosyncrasies, gotten used to the temperatures and tides, and made friends with some of the old-timers from the Dolphin Club or the nearby South End Club. They have taught me how to make the water work for me and to regard it with respect. ■ No matter how long you've been swimming, it's still an act of will to jump into the bay each day. Living up to that kind of commitment carries over to your personal life, although it's difficult to articulate what it does for your soul. Many swimmers use the bay to solve problems, to work out emotions and frustrations—as a place to sort things out. One friend looks at swimming in the bay as a symbol for what is going on in her subconscious. She can't see it, but if she swims in the bay it usually gives her a new view. ■ For those independent souls who take the plunge daily, it is perfectly natural to believe that vital, life-changing answers and lasting, hard-won serenity can be found by swimming in the rough, frigid waters of San Francisco Bay.



LIZ SPURR

A racer and master of Hawaii's Ironman Triathlon and San Francisco's Escape from Alcatraz race.

"In the winter, the frost is so cold on the pier that your feet practically freeze. Swimming in the bay is more of a mental thing than a physical thing. It's a high. I get confidence from my successes in sports. But my coworkers think I'm a nut."



ERA OSIBE

Tebran native and one of the first female members of the Dolphin Club.

"I have only one bad memory of swimming. In the 1982 Alcatraz Swim, I ended up way off course. My legs got badly cut by barnacles. I was bleeding and very cold, but I finished."

WALT SCHNEEBELI

Dolphin Club member since 1948.

"I'm in training now for a big swim—they want to see if an old geezer can swim from the Bay Bridge to the Golden Gate."



KLEMENT JESCK

German native and ten-year veteran of the Dolphin Club.

"Bay swimmers are a different breed of humans in that they are truly conscious and are connected with the elements. That may give greater authenticity to the rest of their lives—perhaps a greater daring, also."